

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6762

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION ONE OF TWO BEIRUT 13134

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: THE CHRISTIAN "REJECTION FRONT" AN ASSESSMENT

1. SUMMARY: UNCOMPROMISING MEMORANDUM FROM MARONITE LEAGUE  
AND MARONITE MONASTERIES PUBLISHED LAST WEEK UNDERSCORES  
EXISTENCE OF HARD LINERS AMONG CHRISTIANS WHO ARE MINOR  
IMAGE OF REJECTION FRONT ON OTHER SIDE. NEITHER LEAGUE NOR  
MONASTERIES SPEAK FOR ALL MARONITES, AND WE KNOW MANY PROMINENT  
MARONITE AND OTHER CHRISTIAN LEADERS FAVOR WELFARE REFORMS  
AND POLITICAL CONSESSIONS TO MOSLEMS. BUT SIMPLY BY BEING  
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MORE VOCAL, MEMORANDUM'S AUTHORS HAVE PRE-EMPTED MARONITE

OPINION IN WAY THAT FEW MARONITE LEADERS DARE IGNORE. CHRISTIAN  
OPINION IN GENERAL DEEPLY DIVIDED, WITH MANY CHRISTIANS EXHIBITING  
HAWK DOVE SPLIT PERSONALITY. SEVERAL OF THEIR LEADERS  
TEND TO PLAY DOUBLE GAME OF "DIALOGUE" ON ONE HAND AND THE HARD  
LINE STANCE ON OTHER, JSUT AS LEADERS ON THE OTHER SIDE SHOW  
CONSTRUCTIVENESS AND YET HANDLE "REJECTIONISTS" GINGERLY. THIS  
MAY REFLECT OPENING PHASE OF BARGAINING FOR HIGH STAKES, BUT  
IT HEIGHTENS INSTABILITY OF MODERATE CENTER. END SUMMARY.

2. PUBLICATION LAST WEEK OF HARD LINING MEMORANDUM TO PRES  
FRANGIE FROM THE MARONITE LEAGE AND THE MARONITE MONASTERIES  
(BEIRUT 12820) HIGHLIGHTS FACT THAT CHRISTIAN POPULATION HAS  
EXTREMISTS THAT ITS MODERATES MUST DEAL WITH JUST AS 'ARAFAT  
COPE WITH HIS "REJECTION FRONT". IMPLICATIONS OF THIS PHENOMENON  
ARE DISCUSSED BELOW.

I. A SALVO FROM THE RIGHT

3. AUTHORS OF THE MARONITE DOCUMENT WERE CHAKER ABOUSLEIMAN  
A LAWYER AND HEAD OF THE MARONITE LEAGUE, AND CHARBEL KASSIS,  
SUPERIOR OF THE ORDER OF MARONITE MONKS. THEY REPRESENT TWO  
INFLUENTIAL ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN MARONITE COMMUNITY, ON LAY  
AND THE OTHER CLERICAL. BOTH MEN ARE PROMINENT MARONITE SPOKESMEN  
AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS HIGHLY POLITICIZED. THE MONKS IN RECENT  
MONTHS HAVE ACTIVELY SUPPORTED CHRISTIAN STRUGGLE, PASSING THE  
AMMUNITION AT LEAST AS EARGELY AS PRAISING THE LORD.

4. THE MAIN POINT OF THE MEMORANDUM WAS THAT LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY  
HAS BEEN DESTROYED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY BY PALESTINIAN  
"OCCUPATION". KARAME CABINET WAS SHARPLY CRITICIZED FOR ITS  
FAILURE TO SOLVE PROBLEM AND FOR ITS INABILITY TO RESTORE SECURITY  
IN GENERAL. MEMORANDUM NOTED POINTEDLY THAT ONE PLACE TAKEN  
OVER BY THE PALESTINIANS IS TRIPOLI, KARAME'S HOMETOWN. OBVIOUS  
WAY TO HANDLE THE SITUATION, THE AUTHORS DECLARED, IS TO  
CALL IN THE ARMY. THE DOCUMENT STATED THAT "PRETEXTS INVOKED  
BY SOME TO REFUSE RECOURSE TO THE ARMY HAVE BEEN OVERCOME  
BY REMOVAL OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF, DRAFTING OF ANY ARMY  
REORGANIZATION LAW, ETC. YET THE ARMY IS STILL NOT USED.  
MEMORANDUM CALLED ON PRES FRANGIE TO PUT THIS MATTER BEFORE  
PUBLIC OPINION, NOT ONLY IN LEBANON BUT INTERNATIONALLY THROUGH  
THE ARAB LEAGUE OR UNITED NATIONS. ABOVE ALL, DOCUMENT SAID,  
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DEMANDS FOR REFORM MUST BE SET ASIDE UNTIL PRIMORDIAL QUESTION OF  
SOVEREIGNTY IS RESOLVED.

5. THOUGH GENERAL IN NATURE, THESE POINTS WERE READ BY MOST  
LEBABESE AS AN UNCOMPROMISING REJECTION OF MOSLEM REFORM  
DEMANDS FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTUR. FACT MEMORANDUM WAS ADDRESSED  
TO THE PRESIDENT AND CRITICIZED PRIME MINISTER WAS ALSO SEEN  
AS AN EFFORT TO BOLSTER SAGGING FRANGIE, WHO HOLDS THE KEY

OFFICE FROM AMRONITE VIEWPOINT AND WHOSE DWINDLING INFLUENCE IS OF CONCERN TO ALL CHRISTIANS. WEM WE UNDER STAND THAT ORIGINAL VERSION SUBMITTED PRIVETELY TO PRESIDENT HAD BEEN EVEN SHARPER IN ATTACKING KARAME AND HAD IMPLIED STRONGLY THAT FRANGIE SHOULD DISMISS PRIME MINISTER AND FORM NEW GOVERNMENT THIS LANGUAGE, WE ARE TOLD, WAS TAKEN OUT AT FRANGIE'S REQUEST. BUT HINT STILL CAME THROUGH IN PUBLISHED VERSION.

## II. THE CHRISTIAN SPECTRUM OF OPINION

6. NEITHER MARONITE LEAGUE NOR MONKS CAN CLAIM SPEAK FOR ALL MARONITE LAYMEN OR CLERGY, THOUGH THEY SOMETTIMES TRY. MARONITE PATRIARCH KREISH, WHO HOLDS LOOSE AUTHORITY OVER THE MONKS, IS FAR LESS ACTIVIST AND MORE LOOSE MODERATE THAN KASSIS. MEMBERSHIP OF MARONITE LEAGUE IS ONLY SMALL FRACTION OF THE COMMUNITY'S LAYMEN. IN TALKING TO CHRISTIAN OPINION LEADERS, WE GET NO LACK OF UNDERSTANDING FROM MOST OF THEM THAT POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REFORMS ARE NEEDED TO KEEP LEBANON ON AN EVEN KEEL. WE BELIEVE THIS IS MAJOR ELEMENT, FOR EXAMPLE. IN OPINIONS OF MENT LIKE CENTRAL BANK CHAIRMAN ELIAS SARKIS AND NATIONAL BLOC LEADER RAYMOND EDDE. SUCH MEN ARE READY TO INSTITUTE NOT ONLY SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS BUT ALSO SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL CONCESSIONS TO MOSLEMS. SUCH REASONABLENESS EVEN COMES THROUGH IN SOME KATAEB PRONOUNCEMENTS, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, THOUGH MIXED WITH TOUGHNESS.

7. BUT UNQUESTIONABLY A STRIDENT STRAIN ECHOING THE ABOVE MEMORANDUM DOMINATES MUCH OTHER CHRISTIAN THINKING. IT IS A REACTION CLOSER TO THE NERVE AND REFLECTS FEAR CHRISTIANS FEEL AS LEBANON TO WHICH THEY ACCUSTOMED SLIPS.

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